



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2004

ITEM NUMBER: _____

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE STREETScape AND MEDIAN
DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2004

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, MAINTENANCE SERVICES MANAGER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: BRUCE A. HARTLEY, (714) 754-5123

RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission recommend to the City Council the adoption of a resolution amending certain sections of the Streetscape and Median Development Standards as follows:

1. Allow the City to participate in the design and construction costs for upgrading and maintenance of existing arterial street walls, at specified locations. (Section 8.0)
2. Modify the criteria for the removal of City-owned parkway trees. (Section 4.0.2)
3. Establish criteria for the planting of American Sweetgum and Brisbane Box trees. (Appendix C)
4. Adopt the new plant palette for 19th Street. (Section 6.03)
5. Adopt the new plant palette for southbound Newport Blvd. between Arlington Dr. and Fair Drive. (Section 6.03)

BACKGROUND

The City Council, through the adoption of Resolution No. 99-60, established the Streetscape and Median Development Standards (Standards) on September 7, 1999. The Standards represent the adopted "Vision" for the future of the City of Costa Mesa streetscapes. The Standards were created to meet the goal of providing a cohesive urban design for the City, to enhance recreational opportunities, and to improve and protect the future visual quality of Costa Mesa.

Additionally, Costa Mesa has met the requirements for and has the privilege of being designated "Tree City USA." Consequently, these Standards focus particularly on increasing and improving the inventory of trees in the community. Consideration and attention have been given to the preservation and protection of existing healthy trees, especially in the residential parkways. The Standards also encourage the use of appropriate species of canopy trees along the parkways, in the street medians, and in the street setback landscaped area on private commercial, industrial, and residential property. Consistent, yet distinct streetscape corridors have been created through the use of median and parkway development along with city-wide standardized street furniture such as: entry

signs, bus benches, street side rest benches, trash receptacles, and other specialized furniture.

On three occasions in the past, the City Council has adopted changes to the Standards to keep the document current with changes in the vision for the streetscapes and medians and to address changes in the management process for the City's street trees.

The proposed modifications to the Standards address five issues: 1) Allow for City participation in the costs associated with constructing and maintaining arterial walls. 2) Modify the criteria for the removal of City parkway trees to allow greater staff discretion and reduce the frequency the Commission and Council consider apparently 'routine' requests. 3) Addition of criteria guiding the planting of American Sweetgum and Brisbane Box trees to prevent the planting of these species in locations inadequate in space for their roots. 4) Adopt the plant palette approved by City Council for the 19th Street medians and streetscape. 5) Adopt the plant palette approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission for southbound Newport Blvd. bicycle trail and streetscape, between Arlington Avenue and Fair Drive.

These issues are more particularly described below:

Arterial Walls: The City's "Standards", as amended on August 4, 2003, (City Council Resolution 03-50) included sections establishing a standard procedure for City participation in the design and construction of arterial street walls (Section 8.0). This section has been amended a number of times to standardize the type of material accepted for arterial walls; to set design standards; and to establish the criteria for City financial participation and the type of financing offered by the City.

The development of Arterial Street Wall Standards has been in place since 1999. The City Council, homeowners, and neighborhood associations, as well as the general public, offered input when revisions to this section were enacted to enhance the program and to better address existing conditions not clearly defined by the existing standards. The City's current policy only allows for the City to participate financially with property owners and developers to construct/reconstruct arterial street walls and does not address the renovation or repair of existing walls.

Tree Removal Criteria: At the City Council meeting of September 9, 2003, the Council requested that staff review the removal criteria and recommend a process to allow more staff discretion in determining whether or not a tree should be removed when there is damage to public or private property. See Attachment 1. The basis of the request was to reduce the number of tree removal requests that would be agendized for the Parks and Recreation Commission and to reduce the potential appeals that would be heard by the Commission due to staff determination.

The current procedures for the removal and replacement of City-owned parkway trees are included in Section 4.0 – Criteria For Parkway Tree Removal/Replacement of the Standards. Tree removal requests are placed into three categories: Category 1 – Health and Safety Removals (Section 4.0.1). Category 2 – Accelerated Removals (Section 4.0.2). Category 3 – Discretionary Removals (Section 4.0.3). Tree removal requests that meet the criteria for Category 1 are routinely approved by Maintenance Services Division staff, with the tree removed at City expense. Tree removal requests that meet the criteria for Category 2 typically are for tree species listed as "Problem

Tree Species” by the Standards. These removals are usually approved by staff, with the removal and three-to-one replacement trees being paid for by the applicant and services provided by the City or a contractor on behalf of the City. The final category for tree removal requests, Category 3, is for all other types of “discretionary removals”. All requests in this category are brought to the Parks and Recreation Commission for consideration. The Commission is the final authority on tree removals, unless a City Council Member appeals a decision, within seven days of the Commission’s decision.

Problem Tree Species: At the August 27, 2003 Commission meeting, Vice-Chair Harris requested staff to review tree removals in the recent past to develop an historical perspective of which trees are consistently causing problems leading to frequent requests for removal. The Standards currently list six species of trees as “Problem Tree Species”. With the apparent frequency of tree removal requests relating to Brisbane Box trees, the Vice-Chair directed staff to attempt to quantify which trees are causing most of the problems throughout the community, resulting in removal requests to the Commission. ‘Problem Tree Species’ are listed in Section 4.0.2 Category 2 – Accelerated Removals.

19th. Street Plant Palette: The proposed changes to the plant palette for 19th Street between Park Avenue and Placentia Avenue were approved by P & R commission on October 22, 2003 and City Council on January 5, 2004. A resolution adopting the change will complete the formal process of amending the Standards to reflect the approved changes.

Primary Tree (parkway tree): Queen Palm, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*

Median Tree: Crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica*

Median Accent Tree: Queen Palm, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*

Median Accent Shrub:

New Zealand Flax, *Phormium tenax* ‘Maori Queen’

Daylily, *Hemerocallis* spp.

Kaffir Lilly, *Clivia miniata*

Median Ground Cover:

Creeping Phlox, *Phlox paniculata*

Candytuft, *Iberis sempervirens* ‘Little Gem’

Heliotrope, *Heliotropium arborescens* ‘Atlantis’

Yellow Gazania, *Gazania* ‘Mitsua Yellow’

Newport Blvd. Plant Palette: The proposed plant palette for Newport Blvd. southbound, between Arlington Ave. and Fair Dr. was approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on January 28, 2004. A resolution adopting the palette will complete the formal process of amending the Standards to reflect the approved changes. The Standards do not currently contain a plant palette for the streetscape, listing only plant choices for the median. The plant palette approved by the Commission is recommended to be the plant palette for both sides of the street to establish and maintain a consistent appearance. The Plant Palette is:

Primary Tree: Red-Flowering Eucalyptus, *Eucalyptus ficifolia*

Parkway and Median Tree: Crape Myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica*

Parkway and Median Accent Shrubs:

Day Lily, *Hemerocallis* spp.

Indian Hawthorn, ‘Springtime’, *Raphiolepis indica* ‘Springtime’

Parkway and Median Groundcover:
Yellow Gazania, *Gazania* "Mitsua Yellow"
Heliotrope, *Heliotrope* spp.

ANALYSIS

Arterial Walls: The proposed revisions to Section 8.0 of the Standards establish the criteria for City participation in the upgrading and maintenance of existing masonry walls located along arterial streets, at specified locations and the respective design standards. The proposed approved locations under this program are listed under Section 8.01. Attachment 2 shows the revisions made to Section 8.0 (additions or changes are indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~).

Tree Removal Criteria: The proposed addition of a second potential set of 'Criteria' to be considered under Section 4.0.2 – Category 2 – Accelerated Removals would allow staff more flexibility in considering factors that are not currently listed in the Standards, but are a recurring theme from those property owners requesting parkway tree removals. The consideration of litter from the tree, impacts of the tree on the use of adjacent property, impacts on surrounding private property improvements i.e. hardscape, landscape, masonry structures, etc. would be factors that could be evaluated and weighed when determining if a tree is causing unreasonable impacts on the property owner where it is located. Staff could make decisions based on these factors and possibly reduce the number of appeals that are brought to the Commission for action. Currently, staff follows the Standards exactly as adopted, resulting in many removal requests be categorized as Discretionary Removals. Proposed amendments to Section 4.0.2 are presented in Attachment 3.

Problem Tree Species: Staff evaluated the trees removed by the City over the past two and one half years. The total number removed was 294. Of the total, the four species most often removed, and the quantity are: Shamel Ash (30), Red Iron Bark Eucalyptus (24), American Sweetgum (21), Brisbane Box (16), Cajeput or Melaleuca (10). The Shamel Ash is on the 'nuisance tree species' list. The others are not. Staff believes that the Red Iron Bark is not a 'problem tree', although the removal numbers are significant. The American Sweetgum is quite often found to be causing significant damage and is a source of complaint due to the spiny, ball-shaped fruit it produces. The Brisbane Box appears to cause less damage, but is also a source of complaints related to the litter it produces in the form of heavy flower, seedpods and leaf drop.

Recommended changes to the Standards would not add any new trees to the 'Problem Tree Species', but would address the problem by not allowing American Sweetgum or Brisbane Box to be planted in parkways that are too narrow, (parkways of at least 6-8' in width would be required, with widths of 4' acceptable under current Standards). This would be despite those trees being the approved street tree for a particular location or replacing an existing American Sweetgum or Brisbane Box. Brisbane Box would be moved from 'Group C' to 'Group B' to affect this change. Additionally, the proposed amendment would allow only the 'Rotundiloba' variety of American Sweetgum to be planted in the City, as it does not have the problematic fruit of the 'Palo Alto' and 'Festival' varieties now specified in the Standards. Round-Lobed Sweetgum would be added to 'Group B'. The 'Palo Alto' and 'Festival' varieties of American Sweetgum would be deleted from 'Group C'. Changes would be made to Appendix C – Public Parkway Tree Palette, to reflect the proposed amendments. See Attachment 6.

19th. Street Plant Palette: The plant palette was reviewed and approved by Commission and Council. No further consideration is requested, other than the recommendation to adopt the resolution finalizing the changes. See Attachment 4.

Newport Blvd. Plant Palette: The design for the Newport Blvd. bike trail, between Arlington Ave. and Fair Dr. was recently completed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission the January 28, 2004 meeting. With input from City Council members, representatives from the Orange County Fairgrounds and City staff, a final design for the bike trail and the associated landscape improvements was developed, incorporating many improvements on trail layout and plant selection. The plant palette for the project is recommended to be adopted as the approved palette for southbound Newport Blvd. Currently, the only plant palette listed in the Standards is for median landscape along that portion of Newport Blvd. The bike trail project will establish a consistent landscaped appearance for people entering Costa Mesa from the SR-55 freeway and from Newport Blvd. traveling south from Bristol St.

The plant palette was reviewed and approved by Commission. No further consideration is requested, other than the recommendation to adopt the resolution finalizing the changes See Attachment 5.

The proposed resolution revises Sections 4.0 and Section 8.0 of the Standards to incorporate the arterial wall program, changes in the tree removal criteria and the recommended changes to the 19th St. and Newport Blvd. plant palettes.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. The Commission could approve all the proposed amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards as presented, and recommend to the City Council adoption of the resolution.
2. The Commission could modify the proposed amendments to the Standards, and recommend to the City Council adopting a resolution as amended.
3. The Commission could deny the requested amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards.

FISCAL REVIEW

If the resolution is adopted and the Standards are amended, funding for arterial walls may be appropriated for these programs yearly, subject to City Council approval during the budget review process. The financial contribution by the City is outlined in the proposed amendments to the Streetscape and Median Development Standards.

There are no fiscal impacts if Recommendations Nos. 2,3,4,5 are approved.

LEGAL REVIEW

The City Attorney's office reviewed the attached resolution to amend the existing Streetscape and Median Development Standards and has approved it as to form.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommend the adoption of the proposed resolution to the City Council to revise Sections 4.0, 6.03, 8.0 and Appendix C of the Streetscape and Median Development Standards.

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Public Services Director

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 [Excerpts from 09/02/03 City Council Meeting](#)
- 2 [Section 8 revised 08/21/03](#)
- 3 [Proposed Amendments Section 4.0.2](#)
- 4 [19th Street Plant Palette](#)
- 5 [Newport Blvd. Plant Palette](#)
- 6 [Proposed Appendix C](#)

C: City Manager
Public Services Director
City Engineer
Deputy City Clerk